

A
PECK O' MAUT

PATRICK R.
CHALMERS

74
A Book of light Verse

Delightful

186

OLD BALLECHIN,
STRATH TAY,
by PITLOCHRY,
PERTSHIRE DUNDEE

A PECK O' MAUT

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

GREEN DAYS AND BLUE DAYS

PIPES AND TABORS

PANCAKES

A PECK O' MAUT

BY

PATRICK R. CHALMERS

"WILLIE BREWED A PECK O' MAUT"

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To
L. H.

Of the following verses two have appeared in the WESTMINSTER GAZETTE ; the rest, with two exceptions, in PUNCH. To the Editor of the one and the Proprietors of the other I beg to express my thanks for their courteous permission to republish.

P. R. C.

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AN OLD HOUSE

*Great Rome was raised on hill-tops seven :
In pomp to all the winds of Heaven
Her brazen eagles flew :*

I know an old house in a hollow,
Its white walls harled with good Scots
harling ;
Here haunts at dawn the gossip starling,
Here comes the first returning swallow
When skies are egg-shell blue.

*Great Rome, she walled eternal glory :
The fame that rang in camp and story
Still to her stones belongs :*

The old house shadows, quaint and fragrant,
A garden famed for stocks and roses,
Where, when a summer evening closes,
Old borders bloom, half-guessed and vagrant,
Like echoes of old songs.

AN OLD HOUSE

*Great Rome, she wardened miles of marches :
From Afric's palms to Albion's larches
Her clamorous trumpets went :*

Here are, for its sedate controlling,
But some few score of sunny acres
Fruitful and fair, content as quakers,
Spanned in a Sunday morning's strolling
To the wood-dove's lament.

*Great Rome, high-hilled, all roads reached to her :
Her conquering sons who served and knew her
In pomp returned again :*

The old house dozes in its hollow,
Fulfilled of gentle ghosts and graces
Come back to haunt remembered places,
As comes the first returning swallow
In sunshine or in rain.

BY THE ROMAN ROAD

THE wind it sang in the pine-tops, it sang like
a humming harp ;

The smell of the sun on the bracken was
wonderful sweet and sharp,

As sharp as the piney needles, as sweet as the
gods were good,

For the wind it sung of the old gods, as I came
through the wood :

It sung how, long ago, the Romans made a road,
And the gods came up from Italy and found
them an abode.

Its song was of wayside altars (the pine-tops
sighed like the surf),

Of little shrines uplifted, of stone and scented turf,
Of youths divine and immortal, of maids as
white as the snow

That glimmered among the thickets, a mort of
years ago.

All in the cool of dawn, all in the twilight grey,
The gods they came from Italy along the
Roman way.

BY THE ROMAN ROAD

The altar smoke it has drifted and faded afar
on the hill ;
No wood-nymph haunts the hollows ; the reedy
pipes are still ;
No more the youth, Apollo, shall walk in the
sunshine clear ;
No more the maid, Diana, shall follow the
fallow-deer.
(The woodmen grew so wise, the woodmen
grew so old,
The gods went back to Italy, and so the story's
told !)

But the woods are full of voices and of shy and
secret things—
The badger down by the brook-side, the flick
of a woodcock's wings,
The plump of a falling fir-cone, the pop of the
sun-ripe pods,
And the wind that sings in the pine-tops the
song of the ancient gods—
The song of the wind that says the Romans
made a road,
And the gods came up from Italy and found
them an abode.

ON SIMON'S STACK

HILL shepherds, hard north-country men,
Bring down the baaing blackface droves
To market or to shearing-pen
From the high places and the groves—
High places of the fox and gled,
Groves of the stone-pine on the scree,
Lone sanctuaries where we have said :
'The gods have been ; the gods may be !'

'Mid conifer and fern and whin
I sat ; the turf was warm and dry ;
A sailing speck, the peregrine
Wheeled in the waste of azure sky ;
The blue-grey clouds of pinewoods clung,
Their vanguard climbed the heathery steep ;
A terrier with lolling tongue
Blinked in my shadow, half asleep.

The Legion's Way shone far beneath :
A javelin white as Adria's foam,
It gleamed across dark leagues of heath
To Rome, to everlasting Rome ;

ON SIMON'S STACK

Likewise from Rome to Simon's Stack
That broods above the fells ; and so
It may have brought a Huntress back
On trails She followed long ago.

I watched my drifting smoke-wreaths rise,
And pictured Pagans, plumed and tense,
Who climbed the hill to sacrifice
To great Diana's excellence ;
And—' Just the sort of church for me,'
I said, and heard a fir-cone fall :
The puppy bristled at my knee—
And that was absolutely all.

A queer thing is a clump of fir ;
But, if it's old and on a hill,
Free to that ancient trafficker,
The wind, it's ten times queerer still :
Sometimes it's filled with bagpipe skirls,
Anon with heathen whispering :
Just then it seemed alive with girls
Who laughed, and let a bowstring sing !

Yes, funny things your firwoods do :
They fill with elemental sounds ;
Hence, one has fancied feet that flew
And the high whimpering of hounds :

ON SIMON'S STACK

A wind from out the hill's great cup?

‘Only the wind,’ said I to Tramp:

He heard—stern down and hackles up:

I with a forehead oddly damp.

.

Wind? or the Woodland Chastity

Who passed, immortal, on Her way,

And left a little dog and me

Confounded in the light of day?

A rabbit whipped across the track;

The pup pursued with shrill *ki-yi*;

I asked him which, when he came back;

He couldn't tell—no more can I.

PANDEAN

'Twas harvest time and close and warm,
A day when tankards foam,
But when there came the thunder-storm
We'd got the last load home ;
We'd knocked off work—as custom is—
Though 'tweren't but four o'clock,
And turned in to Jim Stevens's,
That keeps 'The Fighting-Cock.'

The rain roared down in thunder-thresh,
And roared itself away,
And left the earth as sweet and fresh
As though 'twas only May ;
And from outside came stock and clove
And half a dozen more ;
And then up steps a piping cove,
A-piping at the door.

We tumbles out to hear him blow,
Tu-wit, he blew, *tu-wee*,
On rummy pipes o' reeds a row—
Their likes I never see ;

PANDEAN

And, as he blew, he shook a limb
And capered like a goat ;
And us bold lads, we looks at him
Like rabbits at a stoat.

An oddly chap and russet red,
He capered and he hopped ;
A bit o' sacking on his head
Although the rain had stopped :
Tu-wee he blew, he blew *tu-wit*,
All in the clean sunshine,
And oh, the creepy charm of it
Went crawling up my spine.

I don't know if the others dreamed—
'Cos why, they never tell—
But in a little bit it seemed
I knew the tune quite well ;
It seemed to me I'd heard it once
In woods away and dim,
Where someone with a hornéd sconce
Came capering like him.

It held me tight, that tune o' his,
It crawled on scalp and skin,
Till sudden—'long o' choir-practice—
The belfry bells swung in :

PANDEAN

The piping cove, he turned and passed,
Till, through the golden broom
A mile along, we saw him last
Go lone-like up the coombe.

The belfry bells they rang—one—two ;
The spell was lift from me,
The spell the oddly piper blew—
Tu-wit, he went, *tu-wee* ;
The spell was lift that he had laid,
But still—*tu-wee*, *tu-wit*—
I can't forget the tune he played,
And that's the truth of it.

THE BALLAD OF CLOUD- ON-THE-HILL

A LEGEND OF THE PEREGRINE

CLOUD-ON-THE-HILL was a medicine man
Who made the spells for the Falcon clan
When the wigwams stood at Saskatchewan,
Ere the tribes were little and few :
A Sachem bred to the medicine course,
He knew the track of the two-toed horse
And where the West wind gathered his force
And the way that the wild-duck flew.

A Sachem bred and a hunting brave,
He knew the voices of wind and wave,
And he followed the grizzly to his cave
And killed ere the great paw struck ;
And his face was bronzed and his eye was keen
And his stride was smooth and his leap was
clean :
He could go a-foot when the woods were green
And run down the blacktail buck.

CLOUD-ON-THE-HILL

Now, Cloud-on-the-Hill grew old and old :
His scalp-lock whitened, his hands grew cold,
He walked no more when the woods turned gold,
 But sat in his painted tent ;
He sat, with his dreams, in the birch-log's smoke,
With his grizzlies' claws for a fearsome yoke,
And gazed in the fire till the great gods spoke,
 And into the dark he went.

Into the dark where the ghosts abound,
Till he came to the heavenly hunting-ground—
'Twas a blue, fat place that the hunter found,
 Where the tame herds wander slow ;
And a man may slay till he wearies, yes,
And feast all night on their plenteousness,
Yet the herds are never a head the less
 Of the sleek dream-buffalo !

And the years fell from him and left him strong,
And he killed the buffalo all day long ;
At night he feasted mid dance and song
 With the braves, of the flesh-pots free ;
But ever he fingered his grizzlies' claws,
And dreamed the smash of the downward paws,
Till he sickened (he said) of a place for squaws,
 And he cried to the gods, cried he :

CLOUD-ON-THE-HILL

‘O watchers silent, O ye who scan,
I’m Cloud-on-the-Hill, the medicine-man,
A hunting brave of the Falcon clan
And born to the house of a king ;
And my heart’s a-weary that ever I came
To run your buffalo fat and tame,
For I’d kill as of old for the lust of the game
And not for the slaughtering.

‘And I’m fain for the gales where the wild-
fowl flew,
And the frozen wastes of the caribou,
And the starving dusks of the days I knew,
By the elk-bull’s bellow torn.’
And the Chief God spoke : ‘To the Earth
you’re dead,
And—weary of Us—go forth,’ he said :
‘’Twixt Heaven and Earth you shall rieve
your bread,
And couch on the crags forlorn ;

‘A tiercel wild, you shall foot in air,
With a clean, quick stoop, and a bright, bold
stare,
And harry the fowl o’er the hill-sides bare,
And strike your quarry a-wing ;

CLOUD-ON-THE-HILL

You shall drive like bolt from the vault above,
Or hang aloft in the gales you love,
And slay for your need, and the lust thereof,
And not for the slaughtering !'

.
A speck sails fast in a stormy sky ;
The grouse packs scatter, and wheel and fly.
'Old Cloud-on-the-Hill is out,' say I,
'A chief and a medicine-man !'
The lightning's child—where the hill-shower
shifts,
He strikes his quarry a-wing, he lifts,
Where the great winds roar in the granite rifts,
As they did when the world began !

MAMMOTHS

UP and down the high woods, up and down
the low,

Must 'a' gone a-hunting morts of years ago ;
When the beaver whistled, when the aurochs
ran,

Must 'a' been a-hunting when the world began.

For I half remember (tusk on kingly tusk)
How I've seen the mammoths moving through
the dusk :

Mammoths all a-marching, terrible to see,
Through an awful oak-wood glooming ghoul-
ishly.

Shadows huge and hairy, as the day was done,
Somehow I remember, walking one by one,
Bulls grotesque and solemn, pulling boughs in
halves ;

Running 'neath their mothers, little idiot
calves.

MAMMOTHS

Lumping through the oak-swamp, vast and
dim and grey,
I have watched the mammoths pass at dusk of
day ;
Through the quaking hollow, through the tree-
trunks stark,
Gleams of mighty ivory breaking up the dark.

That's the way I dream it, that's the way I
know,
Must 'a' gone a-hunting, years and years ago :
For I've seen the mammoths—'t isn't you that
could—
Moving like cathedrals through a dreadful
wood.

BRANDY

(A HILL-MAN)

GRIZZLED and stiff with his eight Decembers
The old dog hobbles across the yard,
Eyes blood-shotten and red as embers,
Coat worn thin and a face be-scarred :
Poor old bandy dog, poor old Brandy dog,
Full of battles and fights fought hard.

Time to sit in the cosy ingle ?
Time to curl on the roe-skin mat,
Where the warrior dreams shall mingle
Fox and otter and mountain-cat ?
Torn ears cock to them, grim jaws lock to them
(Devil a doubt—you'd say—of that !).

'Past your best,' so the critic said it,
'Bit too old for the hill,' said he ;
'Liked the looks of you' (to his credit,
Captious Sassenach though he be) ;
That's his say of it, that's the way of it ?
Let him climb to the cairns and see !

BRANDY

Cairns and crags where the snow-flake flurries,
Coigns where the great hill-foxes grin,
Hostile caves of a hundred worries—

Take the terriers, *huic* them in :
Lithe and little dogs, keen and kittle dogs,
Two twin devils to thrust and pin !

Hark, they're up to him, hot and deadly
(Hark, and hear it, and hold your breath !);
Yards below, how the fight roars redly—
Gallant Besom and little Beth ;
Hark the noise of 'em, hark the joys of 'em—
Battle, murder, and sudden death !

Beat, though—out again, bristling, bleeding,
Lost him somehow (your young 'uns can) ;
Pick them up, they shall prove their breeding
Yet with many a cateran—
'Now, old pup, to him ! in, and up to him !
Leu in, Brandy ! leu in, old man !'

Mute and murderous, in he bustles ;
Never a whimper boasts he's found ;
Only an eerie wind that rustles,
Moans and moils, as the flakes go round ;
Dark and chill it is, on the hill it is—
Yes, but the old dog's still to ground !

BRANDY

Out at last crawls the grim old savage,
Red as ribbons from crest to pad ;
One hill-robber no more shall ravage—
Had the brush of him, eh, old lad ?
Lord, no fears o' you, eight hard years o' you ;
Wouldn't 'a' left him 'less you had !

Grizzled and stiff with his long Decembers,
The old dog hirples adown the hill,
Eyes blood-shotten and red as embers,
Rumbling yet of the grip and kill :
Poor old Brandy dog, poor old bandy dog,
Worth the pick of the young 'uns still !

ANNABEL LEE

UP and down on the fresh-ploughed levels,
All for the sake of their lady fair,
Two cock-partridges fought like devils,
Hammer-and-tongs and a hop in the air ;
And I and ' Basket ' Annabel Lee—
Elderly tinkering rip is she—
We leaned on the paling and watched it go.
And ' Eh,' said she, ' now a fight, 'tis cruel,
But of all the compliments, 'tis the jewel !
May I die to-day, but I know—I know
There's naught as a young maid's ' eart
takes better
Than a couple o' big chaps out to get her
Through a dozen o' dustin' rounds or so.

' Bet my bonnet it strikes you funny,
Seein' I'm risin' seventy-three,
To think o' me once as sweet as honey—
Lor' how their fists went 'long o' me !
Jake Poltevo and Pembroke Bill,
I saw 'em then, and I sees 'em still :

ANNABEL LEE

Eh, how their fists went—*thud ! crack ! thud !*
None o' your booze-house scraps, Lor' love
'em ;

Turf to their feet and the sky above 'em—
Stripped, bare-knuckle, and mucked wi' blood ;
Queer thing, ain't it ?—I still thinks pleasure
In the strength o' a man, bein' old, by
measure,
And plain, you 'd say, as a pint o' mud !

'Scared me fine at the time, though ; weepin'
I 'id my face in the 'azels low ;

Tip-toe soon I was back a-peepin',
Couldn't 'a' helped were it never so ;

Each as good as the other chap—
Bad old woman I be, may'ap ;
But eh, I loved 'em, the fine young men.

Marry a one of 'em ? Why no, never ;
They wasn't a-marryin' me whatever ;
But I like to think of 'em now and then ;
For, of all the compliments, *that* was candy,
And—ain't them dicky-birds at it dandy ?

I knows the pride o' their pretty 'en.
Eh, but I loved 'em, me fine young men !'

THE HUNTSMAN'S STORY

I HEARD the huntsman calling as he drew
Threeacre Spinney ;
He found a fox and hunted him and handled
him ere night,
And his voice upon the hill-side was as golden
as a guinea,
And I ventured he'd done nicely — most
respectful and polite—
Jig-jogging back to kennels, and the stars
were shining bright.

Old Jezebel and Jealous they were trotting at
his stirrup ;
The road was clear, the moon was up, 'twas
but a mile or so ;
He got the pack behind him with a chirp and
with a chirrup,
And said he, 'I had the secret from my
gran'dad long ago ;
And all the old man left me, Sir, if you
should want to know.

THE HUNTSMAN'S STORY

‘ And he was most a gypsy, Sir, and spoke the
gypsy lingos,
But he knew of hounds and horses all as
Nimrod might have know’d :
When we’d ask him how he did it, he would
say, “ You little Gringos,
I learnt it from a lady that I met upon the road ;
In the hills o’ Connemara was this wondrous
gift bestowed.”

‘ Connemara—County Galway—he was there
in 1830 ;
He was taking hounds to kennel, all alone,
he used to say ;
And the hills of Connemara, when the night is
falling dirty,
Is an ill place to be left in when the dusk is
turning grey,
An ill place to be lost in most at any time o’ day.

‘ Adown the dismal mountains that night it
blew tremendous,
A-sobbing like a giant and a-snorting like a
whale,
When he saw beside the sheep-track (“ Holy
Saints,” says he, “ defend us ! ”)

THE HUNTSMAN'S STORY

A mighty dainty lady, dressed in green, and
sweet and pale,
And she rode an all-cream pony with an
Arab head and tail.

'Says she to him, "Young gentleman, to you
I'd be beholden
If you'd ride along to Fairyland this night
beside o' me ;
There's a fox that eats our chickens—them
that lays the eggs that's golden—
And our little fairy mouse-dogs, ah, 'tis small
account they be,
Sure it wants an advertising pack to gobble
such as he !"

'So gran'dad says, "Your servant, Miss," and
got his hounds together,
And the mountain-side flew open and they
rode into the hill ;
"Your country's one to cross," says he, and
rights a stirrup-leather ;
And he found in half-a-jiffey, and he finished
with a kill ;
And the little fairy lady, she was with 'em
with a will.

THE HUNTSMAN'S STORY

‘Then “O,” says she, “young man,” says she,
 “’tis lonesome here in Faerie,
 So won’t you stay and hunt with us and
 never more to roam,
And take a bride”—she looks at him—“whose
 youth can never vary,
With hair as black as midnight and a breast
 as white as foam?”
And “Thank you, Miss,” says gran’dad, “but
 I’ve got a wife at home!”

‘Then, “O young man,” says she, “young man,
 then you shall take a bounty,
 A bounty of my magic that may grant you
 wishes three :
Come make yourself the grandest man from
 out o’ Galway County
To Dublin’s famous city all of my good
 gramarye?”
And “Thank you, Miss,” says gran’dad, “but
 such ain’t no use to me.”

‘But he said, since she was pressing of her
 fairy spells and forces,
He’d take the threefold bounty, lest a gift
 he’d seem to scorn :

THE HUNTSMAN'S STORY

He'd ask, beyond all other men, the trick o'
hounds and horses,
And a voice to charm a woodland of a soft
December morn,
And sons to follow after him, all to the
business born.

'And—but here we are at home, Sir. Yes, the
old man was a terror
For his fairies and his nonsense, yet the
story's someways right ;
He'd the trick o' hounds and horses to a marvel
—and no error ;
And to hear him draw a woodland was a
pride and a delight ;
And—*was it luck entirely, Sir, I killed my fox
to-night ?*

THE NEW ANUBIS

ALL along the moorland road a caravan there
comes

Where the piping curlew whistles and the
jacksnipe drums ;

And a long lean dog

At a sling jig-jog,

A poacher to his eyelids as are all the lurcher
clan,

Follows silent as a shadow and as clever as a
man.

His master on the splashboard, oh, of ancient
race he is ;

He came down out of Egypt, as did all the
Romanys ;

With the hard hawk face

Of an old king race,

His hair is black and snaky and his cheek is
brown as tea,

And pyramids and poacher-dogs are made by
such as he.

THE NEW ANUBIS

Now, the dog he looks as pious as the beak
upon the bench,
But he'll pounce and pick a hare up, and he'll
kill her with a wrench,
Or he'll sneak around a rick
And bring back a turkey chick ;
And you'll wonder how they got him all his
cockaleerie fakes :
Well, his master comes of people who turned
walking-sticks to snakes !

There was once a god in Egypt, when the gods
they first began,
With the muzzle of a lurcher on the body of a
man ;
But the Pharaoh of to-day
He has changed the ancient way,
And has found him a familiar by his caravan to
jog,
With the headpiece of a human on the body of
a dog !

CON

CON was the conjurer of the king
Ere the coming of Padraig Mor,
And a wand he had, and a golden ring,
And a five-prong crown he wore ;
And his robe was trimmed with the minever—
His robe of the royal blue,
For Con was the wonderful conjurer
In the days when the tricks were new.

He could pick a rabbit from out of a poke
Where never a rabbit had lain ;
He could pulp your watch like an egg's red
yoke
And could give it you whole again ;
And the king he laughed, ' Ha-ha,' he laughed,
Till they thumped on his back anon ;
And the other magicians went dancing daft
To see the magic of Con.

CON

Now Con he climbed on a moonbeam grey
To the dusk of the god's great shop,
And he stole the Elixir of Life away,
And he drank it, every drop ;
He poured the draught in a golden cup
On a wonderful day that 's gone,
And he swilled it round and he tossed it up—
And that was the curse of Con.

And the old king died at ninety-six
And his son he reigned instead ;
But Con he conjured the same old tricks,
And his hair crow-black on his head ;
And the new king died, and another king,
And another king after he,
But Con went on with his conjuring
The same as it used to be.

When the fifth king came (he was long of limb
And a hasty man), he swore
When Con he conjured his tricks for him,
And he kicked Con through the door ;
For that 's in the songs the minstrels sung,
And thus is the story told,
For 'Con,' said the king, 'you 're none so young,
And your tricks are plaguey old !'

CON

Now Con he tramps from shire to shire,
And he must till the crack of doom ;
He takes the road in the dust and mire,
And he sleeps in the windy broom ;
He's no address and he's no abode,
And his jacket's the worse o' wear ;
And I've met him once on the Portsmouth
Road,
And once at a Wicklow fair.

When the roundabouts and the swings are slow
And a conjuring chap draws near,
And there's nothing about his mug to show
That it's seen five thousand year
(For that's the way that the songs were sung,
And thus is the story told),
You'll know it is Con if he's none so young
And his tricks are plaguey old !

UNCLE STEVE'S FAIRY

YOU 'VE 'eard 'em tell o' fairy folk
As 'ow good luck they bring?
Now don't you 'eed the lies that's spoke :
They don't do no such thing !
You see my thumb, Sir, 'ow it 's tore ?
You'll say, may'ap, a badger boar
'As done it? By your leave,
An' that's a stinkin' fairy, Sir, that bit old
Uncle Steve !

'Twas me an' Ebenezer Mogg
An' little Essex Jim,
The chap that 's got the lurcher dog
That 's cleverer than 'im,
As met to 'ave a bit o' sport
Among the covers at the Court,
Upon the strict Q.T.—
That 's Ebenezer, then, an' Jim, an' Toby-dog
an' me.

UNCLE STEVE'S FAIRY

At 'alf-past ten or so that night
We left 'The Chequers'' bar ;
'Twas dark, an' down the velvet 'eight
Of 'eaven fell a star ;
The moon was settin' through the trees
As big an' white as 'alf a cheese,
The very best she could,
Since we 'ad got the long-net out to try the
'Ome Park wood.

We laid it up the cover side,
A furlong 'mesh-an'-pin' ;
We sent the lurcher rangin' wide
To drive the rabbits in ;
A soft, sweet night in late July—
We lay among the bracken 'igh
That 'eld the midday sun,
While, mute an' wise, ole Toby ranged, enjoyin'
of the fun.

But soon we 'ears the rabbits squeak,
A-kickin' in the cords,
An' gets among 'em, so to speak,
Like gentlemen an' lords ;

UNCLE STEVE'S FAIRY

We slips along their necks to wring,
When Mogg, 'e 'ollers out, 'By Jing !
Look, lads, 'ere 's summut fresh—
A bloomin' fairy-airy's got 'isself into the
mesh !'

We flashed the lanthorn on to 'im :
I tell you, Sir, 'e lay,
A nasty, ugly little limb,
An' yallerer than clay ;
An' wicious !—Ebenezer Mogg
Wanted to back 'im 'gainst the dog ;
But Jim 'e says, 'No go ;
This 'ere'll fetch a mort o' brass for Mr.
Barnum's show !'

I grabs the little jumpin'-jack ;
Says I, 'It's gettin' late ;
We'll shove the beggar in the sack
An' see, at any rate.'
'Twas then ole Buckshot an' his crew
Come dashin' at us 'cross the dew ;
The varmint bit like mad ;
I shook 'im off—'e disappeared ; but *I* was
fairly 'ad !

UNCLE STEVE'S FAIRY

They brought me up at Thornleigh 'Eath ;
I got a fortnight's stretch ;
An' still I feels 'is wicked teeth,
That spiteful little wretch ;
An' still my thumb's all any'ow
In weather (as it is just now)
That's frosty, 'ard an' chill ;
'Tis few things seems to do it good. . . .
Why, thank 'ee, Sir, I will !

ADVENTURERS

It must have been off a pirate trip,
In a life forgot o' me,
That I saw the Barbary pirate ship
Come close-hauled out of the sea ;
She crawled in under a goat-cropped scaur
Beneath the fisher-huts,
And she sent a dozen o' men ashore
To fill her water-butts.

I clambered up where the cliff sprung sheer
Till I looked upon her decks
And saw the plunder of half a year
And the loot of her scuttled wrecks :
There were gems and ivory, plate and pearl,
And Tyrian rugs a-pile,
And, set in the midst, was a milk-white girl,
The loot of a Grecian isle.

As white as the breasted terns that flit
Was the smooth arm's rounded shape,
As she idly played with a pomegranate
To anger a chained grey ape ;

ADVENTURERS

And her sun-god's self for diadem
Had kissed her curls to gold ;
But blue—sea-blue as the sapphire gem,
Her eyes were cold, sea-cold.

And, gleam of shoulder and glint of tress,
They sailed ere the sun went down
And sold her, same as a black negress,
For the marts o' Carthage town,
Where she lived, mayhap, of her indolent grace
Content with her silks and rings,
Or rose, by way of her wits, to place
Her foot on the necks of kings.

The deuce can tell you how this may be,
'Tis as far as I take the tale ;
For it 's lives upon lives ago, you see,
That the Barbary men set sail :
So I only know she was ivory white,
As white as a sea-bird lone ;
And her eyes were wonderful blue and bright
And hard as a sapphire stone.

A UNICORN STORY

I CARED not for his lordship's right,
Nor for his lordship's rangers,
Because the lanes with may were white
And Age and I were strangers :
In Woolcombe Wood that summer morn—
The wisest wood in Britain—
I found a baby unicorn,
As pretty as a kitten.

Most fairylike and elfinwise
Was he from hoof to ear-points,
A budding horn betwixt his eyes,
The tiniest of spear-points ;
Beside the brook where earth the brocks
He stripped a sapling sallow ;
As ruddy as a little fox,
As dappled as a fallow.

He stamped and snorted on the view,
He trotted and he ambled,
But ever yet the closer drew
And in my shadow gambolled ;

A UNICORN STORY

I rubbed his ears and wild shy head—
The velvet of it lingers—
He ate with grace my salted bread
And mumbled at my fingers.

A mile he followed o'er the grass
And took the crusts I tossed him,
Then, sudden as the shadows pass,
I found that I had lost him :
I whistled on the dainty thing ;
None answered to my calling,
Save for the far-off, tuneful ring
Of faint-heard echoes falling.

Though naught know I of signs and saints
And things pertaining thereto,
And portents that a herald paints,
One marvel I can swear to :
In Woolcombe Wood that summer morn—
A wood it ne'er deceives me—
I saw a little unicorn,
But nobody believes me !

ONCE, IN THE DIM WOOD

ONCE, in the dim wood,
Ere dove-winged dawn,
Slender and slim, would
Haunt the faun,
Antic of limb, would
Leap the faun—
Once, in the dim wood,
Ere dove-winged dawn.

Now, ere the cold grey
Moonbeams die,
Only the old grey
Brocks lurch by,
Only the bold grey
Brocks roll by—
Now ere the cold grey
Moonbeams die.

THE TWELVE GARDENERS

I KNOW twelve gardeners good
To make my garden grow
In all the multitude
Of all the blooms that blow ;

Sunflower and rose and pink,
The big flowers and the small,
Yes, any sort you think :
My gardeners serve them all.

They work in shifts of three,
And when one shift has gone
(All gardeners want their tea)
Another shift comes on.

Three gardeners to a shift,
Four shifts of gardeners three,
To make my beds uplift
And burgeon joyously.

THE TWELVE GARDENERS

One shift to ripe the seed ;
And one to tend the flowers
And give them steadfast heed
Throughout the golden hours ;

One shift to drop them down,
Tender and reverent,
Upon Earth's kindly brown,
When all the gold is spent ;

And one to watch and wait
And blow upon its thumbs,
Till through the garden gate
Again the first shift comes.

I know twelve gardeners good
That watch and serve and sow
Of their solicitude
For all the flowers that blow.

I'D HAVE A DAIRY

I'd have a dairy—
 Stool, churn, and dish,
And if a fairy
 Gave me a wish ;
Fragrant and airy,
 Long, clean, and cool,
I'd have a dairy—
 Dish, churn, and stool.

Three maids are plenty—
 May, Moll, and Meg ;
If I paid twenty
 I'd have to beg ;
Thrifty and tenty,
 Up with the day,
Three maids are plenty—
 Meg, Moll, and May.

Cows of my raising,
 White, red, and roan,
I'd have a-grazing
 In fields of my own ;

I'D HAVE A DAIRY

Milkers amazing,
Morning and night,
Cows of my raising,
Roan, red, and white.

I'd give the fairy
Cream, curd, and whey,
Best of my dairy
Fresh every day;
These shouldn't vary
'Neath my door beam;
I'd give the fairy
Whey, curd, and cream.

COWSLIP WINE

THE river ran unheeding ;
The cuckoo made his mock ;
The big trout wasn't feeding ;
I drowed beside the lock ;
It might have been the weather,
It might have been the stream,
Perhaps the two together
That made me dream a dream.

I dreamed a dream of Maytime,
Of hawthorns white as snow,
The village green at playtime
A hundred years ago ;
A dream of bow and fiddle
And dancing on the green,
A maypole in the middle,
The finest ever seen.

The maids were red as roses
That took each ribbon rope ;
The lads who held their posies,
They shone with health and soap ;

COWSLIP WINE

Each lass had got her lover,
Save one I did espy
As plump as any plover,
As sweet as cherry pie.

I slipped an arm around her ;
The fiddles called to me ;
As light of foot I found her
As e'er a lass could be ;
'Sir Roger,' and the same was
Most wonderful to tread ;
I asked her what her name was,
And, 'Hephzibah,' she said.

The fiddlers were in fettle ;
Too soon the dance was done ;
I sat her on a settle,
All dimpling in the sun ;
I found for her a fairing,
This pretty maid of mine,
A kerchief for her wearing,
And cake and cowslip wine.

I said, ' My dear, I love you
Most tender and most true ;
You little, pretty dove, you,
Oh, won't you love me too ? '

COWSLIP WINE

White lids the blue eyes beaming
Swift shadowed as I spoke ;
'Twas then—so much for dreaming—
'Twas then that I awoke.

The cuckoos still were calling ;
In amber, jade and pearls
The splashing weir was falling,
To spin in silver swirls
As gaily as a dancer ;
I rubbed my eyes—but ah,
I never had your answer,
My little Hephzibah !

LITTLE COW HAY

STEPHEN CULPEPPER

Of Little Cow Hay
Farmed four hundred acres—
As Audit-book say;
An' he rode on a flea-bitten
Fiddle-faced grey.

There's the house, in the hollow,
With gable an' eave,
But they've altered it so
That you wouldn't believe :
Wouldn't know the old place
If he saw it—old Steve.

His dads an' his grandads
Had lived there before—
Born, married an' died there—
At least half a score :
Big men the Culpeppers—
As high as the door !

LITTLE COW HAY

His wife was a Makepeace—
An' none likelier,
For she 'd five hundred pounds
When he married o' her ;
An' a grey eye as kindly
As grey lavender.

He 'd sweetest o' roses,
He 'd soundest o' wheat ;
Six sons—an' a daughter
To make 'em complete,
An' he always said Grace
When they sat down to meat.

He 'd the Blessin' o' Heaven
On barnyard an' byre,
For he made the best prices
Of all in the shire ;
An' he always shook hands
With the Parson an' Squire.

An' whether his markets
Had downs or had ups,
He walked 'em three couple
O' blue-mottle pups—

LITTLE COW HAY

As clumsy as ducklings,
As crazy as tups.

But that must be nigh
Sixty seasons away,
When things was all diff'rent,
D'ye see—an' to-day
There ain't no Culpeppers
At Little Cow Hay.

A CHOSEN SAINT

‘St. Tobias and the Angel Rafael.’

SAINTS live in paint
In old Trafalgar Square :
The nicest Saint
Of any of them there,
Most radiant and most rare,
Is no austere Elias,
All steadfastness and care,
But little St. Tobias—
A youth of joyant air.

Mark what befell
Upon a pearl-winged prime—
Great Rafael,
Though Heaven’s harps did chime
A rhapsody sublime,
Forsook the choir most pious
By vale and hill to climb
With little St. Tobias
All in the summer-time.

A CHOSEN SAINT

They walked along
Till meads were dark with dew ;
The lark's high song,
The speedwell's lowly blue
Made music for the two ;
No questions that defy us,
Nor problems we pursue,
I think that day Tobias
Or e'en the Angel knew.

Deep glowing still
The pigments do portray
River and hill,
And those who passed that day
So gracious and so gay.
Lest sterner saints decry us,
Now grant it that we may
Have little St. Tobias
About us on the way !

‘TWO FOR MIRTH’

The Magpies of St. James's.

PIED daws that flit
And flirt your tails
Among the grit,
And soot that sails
Upon our urban breezes,
Each wintry morn
Your moods I mark
Where all forlorn
St James's Park
Shows little else that pleases.

Though walking to
My daily desk,
Your jet-black blue,
Your picturesque
Pure white amid the dreary
Rain-sodden air
And fallen leaves,
O, jolly pair
Of dapper thieves,
Seem admirably cheery.

‘TWO FOR MIRTH’

‘For sadness one,’
The saying went,
‘A pair for fun
And merriment’;
So, friends of dainty feather,
The oracles
Of happy Fate,
Of kindly spells
And fortunate,
I hail you both together.

And, cheered of mind,
I go my ways,
Though chill the wind
And though the day’s
As sombre as a quaker,
Since here you pry
Upon the grass—
Good luck, say I
For all who pass
Through good St James’s acre.

APPLE-GREEN PLATES

THE prettiest colour that ever was seen
To set off a muscat or red tangerine
Is the ancient and honourable real apple-green.

So, if you eat apples or raisins or dates,
In fact, any fruit out of gardens or crates—
They taste much the nicest off apple-green
plates.

Their colour's so quaint and the magic it brings
Is the kind that contrives the most marvellous
things,
Such as April in orchards and old Chinese kings.

Their colour's as fresh and its charm is as high
As the green of a leaf on a blue-and-white sky
When over the orchard the cuckoos go by.

Their colour's so old that it's captured a tang
From green Chinese dragons of horrible fang
That lived 'in the reign of the Emperor
Hwang.'

APPLE-GREEN PLATES

But mostly to me their enchantment assumes
Rep curtains and firelight and spicy perfumes,
And pleasant old ladies in house-keepers' rooms,

Who kept them in cupboards where Fancy still
spreads

Sweet almonds and raisins and brown ginger-
breads

For boys 'who had ought to have been in
their beds.'

So these are the reasons I ask of the Fates
That, should I eat apples or raisins or dates,
I may eat them for always off apple-green plates!

IN DYNASTY MING

The Earthly Paradise : Ming Dynasty.

—*British Museum.*

THE poets have ever been servitors dutiful
Of everything pleasant and everything beautiful;
From Helen of Troy to a handful of roses
They 've pondered their plots and poetical poses;
So I make no excuse for this thesis I bring—
The Eden on earth of the Dynasty Ming !

I am bound to admit you may never have heard
of it :

I hadn't myself, not a chance spoken word of it,
Till I happened to-day in that grave athenæum,
The manuscript-room of the British Museum,
And hit on—they're doubtful who painted the
thing—

This haven of peace in the Dynasty Ming !

It's a garden, of course, and it's painted en-
chantingly

With dear little ladies whose eyes go up
slantingly,

IN DYNASTY MING

Whose dear little faces are fresh as a blossom ;
There 's a baby as cute as a baby opossum
(Yes, baby opossums that clamber and cling
Are just like the baby in Dynasty Ming !).

In the foreground a portly and jolly Chineese
party
Is giving a kind of an afternoon tea-party
To a god and a goddess, at least so one guesses,
For an acolyte zephyr with slavish caresses
Showers down every petal that 's known to the
Spring :
They did themselves proudly in Dynasty Ming !

Such flowers and profusion ! Ah well, 'twas the
Flowery Land
(How pleasant it sounds in this chilly and
showery land !) ;
Just think of the lawns and the lisp of the
fountains,
And the blue in the distance of pine-covered
mountains,
And the graceful white cranes—mark the bold
sweep of wing
Of the one just alighting in Dynasty Ming !

IN DYNASTY MING

'Tis captious, perhaps, still a critic may criticise
Any point in a picture that doesn't quite fit
his eyes ;
And the best Chinese Edens should surely
achieve dogs,
The haughty companions of kings, known as
sleeve-dogs ;
One or two for the baby brought home from
Peking
The critic had asked for in Dynasty Ming !

For he means, when the fogs in sulphureous
fumes bury
The chill London chimneys, if passing through
Bloomsbury
To call for five minutes of phantom and fancy,
And charm of red lacquer, pagoda and pansy,
And dream, in some valley where nightingales
sing,
That the garden still blows as in Dynasty Ming !

There the gods still shall come, spite of Time
and his grim sickle,
Where the dear little ladies look flowerlike and
whimsical,

IN DYNASTY MING

And the jolly old mandarin sits at his table
And eats all the nice little cakes that he's
 able ;
And there the fat baby shall clamber and
 cling
As it did in the days of the Dynasty Ming !

SNAPDRAGON

LONG ago, long ago in the land of Shan-tung,
When the world was attractive and magic and
 young,
Mid the mild pterodactyls the Snapdragon slew,
And his breath was a flame of hot yellow and
 blue ;
He'd pounce, where they played with their
 primitive toys,
Upon fat little raisin-faced Chinaman boys,
And he'd swoop with a snap, as they combed
 out their curls,
Upon fat little almond-eyed Chinaman girls ;
And in fact he went on in so tiresome a way
That the greatest of Chams became filled with
 dismay,
And he said, ' Lest the Snapdragon guzzle and
 gorge
Every kid in our kingdom—let's send for St.
 George ! '

The Saint soon appeared, riding stately and slow,
On a charger as white as the new-driven snow ;

SNAPDRAGON

His shield it was silver, his lance tough and strong,
And his two-handed sword most prodigiously
long ;

But his face it was gentle and merry and kind,
(The best sort of face for a fighter, you 'll find)
And he pulled on his helmet and tightened a strap,
And he cried, 'Where's the dragon who calls
himself Snap ?'

Then the dragon rushed out and the dust and
the din

Of the combat was carried as far as Pekin,
Till the Saint hammered home his most useful
of smacks

And the Snapdragon whimpered, 'St. George,
let's have *pax* !'

'All right,' said St. George, for he wasn't,
you know,

The sort to be hard on a well-hammered foe.

Still, the dragon despondently hung down his
head,

Being frightfully sick at the life that he'd led ;
So the Saint thought a minute and then waved
his sword

And the kids who'd been eaten were safely
restored

SNAPDRAGON

As jolly as ever. The Snapdragon said
He would live for the future on brown ginger-
bread

To show he was sorry and, if it would please,
He would come—as a waiter—to holiday teas.
This task he performed with most pious com-
plaisance,

Though he always *would* hand round the
almonds and raisins,

Which in consequence often appeared in a blaze,
For his breath was blue fire till the end of his
days!

And after his death at a hundred-and-three,
When almonds and raisins were served after tea,
In the land of Shan-tung it was proper and
right

To call them Snapdragon and serve them
alight!

.
And so, my dears, the fearful Beast
That ravaged once the rosy East
Is now that tastiest of myths
You met last Thursday at the Smiths'.
Remember *that* next time you gorge,
And say a grace to good St. George!

OLD CHINA

LITTLE Wun-lee's father, Nang-Poo,
Let her do just what she wanted to do ;
Made her processions with peacocky banners
In the most regal and lavish of manners.

Little Wun-lee's father, Nang-Poo,
Was a magician who lived at Foo-choo.
Now, if you possess a magician of cunning,
Nothing you want should be out of the
 running.

Little Wun-lee had all sorts of things—
Fly-away carpets and vanishing-rings,
Djinn as her footmen, and gem-spraying
 fountains,
And lovely snow-leopards from ghost-haunted
 mountains.

Little Wun-lee, combing her hair,
Saw a blue butterfly float through the air—
Saw a blue butterfly flicker and settle
On an azalea's rosy pink petal.

OLD CHINA

Little Wun-lee said : ‘ By the Mings,
That for your fly-away carpets and rings !
Peacocks and palanquins ? Powers and
dominions ?
I’ll have a pair of blue butterfly’s pinions ! ’

‘ Little Wun-lee,’ answered Nang-Poo,
‘ That ’s the one trick no magician can do ;
Never did wizard of land, air or water
Magic blue wings on a little white daughter.’

Little Wun-lee, dainty and dear,
Cried for a day and a week and a year—
Cried till she died of a Thwarted Ambition,
And nobody cared but Nang-Poo, the magician.

Little Wun-lee, little Wun-lee,
He buried her ’neath the azalea tree ;
And the burnished blue butterflies flicker and
hover,
And the rosy pink petals fall lightly above her.

THE SHIP'S KITTEN

It was a barque that dropped down the river
For the Indies or the Isthmus, and it rained
a bit and blew ;
She had a cargo of deals to deliver
And the Tower Bridge was lifted to let her
go through ;
'Hoo-oo,' said the syrens, 'hoo-oo' and 'hoo-oo,'
'The *Ark* she got her anchor up when early
fell the dew' ;
But the little ship's kitten it started to mew.

When they got to the Bay the cook's bell
tinkled,
Though the big seas they tumbled and the
big seas they rolled,
And through the rain squalls a lone beam
twinkled,
Flashing and wheeling at night-time to behold.
'*Ser-wosh*,' said the great seas, so black and so
bold,
'The *Ark* made heavy weather we have
always heard it told' ;
And the little ship's kitten it let its tea get cold.

THE SHIP'S KITTEN

But when they got to the calm Equator,
The sun was setting crimson, very hot and
heathenish,
And the stars turned over, and the moon grew
greater
Low on the yard-arm like a big gold dish ;
'*Swish*,' sighed the little seas, '*ser-wish*' and
'*ser-wish*,'
'The Lord He sent an olive-branch to them
that did languish' ;
And the little ship's kitten it caught a flying-
fish.

And when they got back from the Indies or
the Isthmus,
The Isthmus or the Indies, whichever they'd
been at,
They'd not seen the Thames since t'other side
of Christmas,
And the Tower Bridge rose end-ways that
lay down so flat ;
'Hoo-oo,' said the syrens, 'how's that?' and
'how's that?'
'We've sailed the Flood a twelve-month and
we're fain for Ararat,'
And the little ship's kitten had grown to a cat !

THE TORTOISESHELL CAT

THE tortoiseshell cat
She sits on the mat,
As gay as a sunflower she ;
In orange and black you see her blink,
And her waistcoat 's white, and her nose is
pink,
And her eyes are green of the sea.
But all is vanity, all the way ;
Twilight 's coming and close of day,
And every cat in the twilight 's grey,
Every possible cat.

The tortoiseshell cat
She is smooth and fat,
And we call her Josephine,
Because she weareth upon her back
This coat of colours, this raven black,
This red of the tangerine.
But all is vanity, all the way ;
Twilight follows the brightest day,
And every cat in the twilight 's grey,
Every possible cat.

IN MARCH

THERE is cloud and a splash of blue sky over-
head,

And the road by the common's the brave road
to tread ;

 You miss all your neighbours,
 And hear the wind play
 His pipes and his tabors
 Along the king's way.

From the elms at the corner the rooks tumble
out

To dance you Sir Roger in clamorous rout ;

 For all honest people
 There's gold on the whin,
 And bells in the steeple,
 And ale at the inn.

The brewer's brown horses, they shine in the
sun,

And each of the team must weigh nearly a ton.

IN MARCH

They stamp and they sidle,
Their great necks they arch,
And snatch at the bridle
This morning of March.

For Winter is over, you see the fine sights—
The geese on the common, the boys flying kites,
The daffydowndillies
That stoop on the stem,
And my pretty Phyllis
Who's gathering them.

RED LEAVES AND ROOKS

BROWN leaves an' scarlet an' golden as a guinea,
The West Wind he drives 'em, he drives
'em ever so,

All down the field-path, an' all down the spinney,
He blows 'em an' shows 'em the road they
must go.

*The North Wind's northerly, the South Wind's
southerly,*

*The East Wind's easterly—oh, blue and hard
he hails:*

*The West Wind's the best wind—so friendly
an' so brotherly,*

*He blows down the beech-nuts, an' fills the
rooks' tails.*

Wild is the West Wind bewilderin' the twilight,
His great clouds comin' like the grey geese
off the seas,

Wild blows his trumpets, his wild voices fly light,
Where fallin' and callin' the rooks take the
trees.

RED LEAVES AND ROOKS

Daylight's diggin' time—from full shield to new sickle

The moon's arrows ever are for true lovers loosed,

But twilight is my light, so trumpety and musical,

When, tossed down the West Wind, the rooks drop to roost.

Black rooks an' gold leaves—oh, goldier than a guinea,

The wild Wind he drives 'em from out the roarin' West,

All down the sky-paths, an' all a-down the spinney,

He flings 'em an' sings 'em to roost an' to rest.

The North Wind's northerly, the South Wind's southerly,

The East Wind's easterly—for all his sunny looks—

The West Wind's the best wind—so friendly an' so brotherly,

He sweeps up the red leaves an' blows home the rooks.

SOME WISHES

A GENTLE autumn may there be
With a late leaf upon the tree,
And clustering of blackberries
In every fruitful lane there is.

To every orchard I would send
Great ruddy globes the boughs to bend,
And I would wish exceeding joy
To every apple-eating boy.

May every garden soon succumb
To hosts of the chrysanthemum,
To stand in splendid rows and blocks
Where stood the routed hollyhocks.

And may I hear when morns are young,
Echo the fox-hound's nimble tongue,
Amid warm woods and misty rides
Where still the gossamer abides.

SOME WISHES

And at the crisping close of day
When woodcock come from Norroway,
May I from down or upland heath
See lamplight in the vale beneath.

And may I tread my homeward mile—
A windy avenue's dark aisle—
Foretasting in the beechen gloom
A pleasant and a friendly room ;

A pleasant room whose curtains fall
To candle-light upon the wall,
And full of dreams and mezzotints
And ghosts of noseays dead long since ;

Where I shall find (the gods are good)
A fire of cleanly apple-wood ;
And muffins—once again—for tea,
And somebody to welcome me !

•

JOHNNY RIGG

JOHNNY RIGG, the ranger,
He walked in Wood-o'-Lea
And happened on a stranger—
A nut-brown maid was she ;
His heart it did rejoice of her,
As you may recognise ;
The wind was in the voice of her,
The stars were in her eyes.

Johnny Rigg, the ranger,
He followed far away,
He didn't know the danger
That lurks at time o' may :
She drew him with the smiles of her,
She left him with a laugh,
Bewildered with the wiles of her,
And moonstruck as a calf.

JOHNNY RIGG

Johnny Rigg, the ranger,
The muckle oaf was he ;
He followed of a stranger ;
She led him bonnily :
The fox he marked the track of him
And watched him through the segs ;
The tinkers ran a-back of him
And stole his pheasant eggs.

Now, all you jolly rangers,
When nesting-time is on,
Don't go to follow strangers,
Nut-brown nor white as swan ;
Beware of 'em, be wise of 'em,
For sooth it is that 's said :
When stars get in the eyes of 'em
The moon gets in your head.

THE LASS I LOVE

THE lass I love, oh, red's her cheek,
Her eyes are bits o' heaven ;
The reason isn't hard to seek—
Her mother's out of Devon.

The lass I love, her plaits are black,
Her tongue is soft and merry—
Her grandad got his pedlar's pack
Among the hills o' Kerry.

The lass I love has thrift for three,
For 'twas her mother's granny
That loved a sailor from Dundee,
Where all the folk are cannie.

Now naught o' hers I've found to link
With land of leek and daffy,
And yet she's thieved my heart (I'll think),
So there's your touch o' Taffy !

FOR A BIRTHDAY

‘The grapes turn to raisins ; not wholly doth the dry
rose perish.’—Lang’s *Theocritus*.

NANCY she is seventeen,
Seventeen is Nancy,
Merry as a May-day green,
Pretty as a pansy ;
Roses red and white hath she,
Hebe’s own her shape is,
Newly riped and daintily
Rounded as a grape is.

Benison, ye Days, and bless
Nancy’s every morrow
With a peck of happiness
And a pinch of sorrow—
Just enough of summer showers
(Too much sun doth harden)
To engage the fruit and flowers
For an August garden.

FOR A BIRTHDAY

One hath said, when Summer 's passed
From the Southern closes,
Raisins are the grapes at last,
Pot-pourri the roses :
Grape and rose, 'tis sad they so
Change with Time's completeness,
Yet a Sage hath bid us know
Both may keep a sweetness.

Howso bonny be a lass,
As the seasons travel
Thus the youngest face doth pass,
Wrinkles come a-ravel,
But upon the proper kind
(Faces such as Nancy's)
Time doth likewise leave behind
What their grace enhances.

Grant me, then, ye Days that fade,
Of your good endeavour,
Autumn sees my April maid
Comelier than ever,
With a heart to be the bowl
Roseleaf Fancy stays in,
And a mellowness of soul
Pleasant as a raisin.

SONG

IN the sunshine went the bee
 Busily, oh, busily ;
White birds flashed upon the sea,
 White cliffs mounted dizzily ;
There a shepherd tuned his reed
For the maiden of his need :
'Shepherdess,' he piped, 'give heed !'
 Long ago in Sicily.

'As the sky your eyes are blue,'
 He continued wittily
(When he said this it was new—
 Just come south from Italy) ;
And she let her lids down fall
(This was then original)
At the marvel of it all—
 Prettily, oh, prettily.

So the milch-goats went astray—
 That's the short and long of it ;
While they laughed the hours away—
 That's the right and wrong of it ;

SONG

Till the white wings ceased to strive,
Till the brown bee sought the hive :
‘ Wonderful ! ’ they said—and I’ve
 Made a silly song of it.

BUDDHA

THE little jade Buddha (his favours increase!)—
 He's soapy and bland,
 And he sits on his stand
And he smiles and he smiles in an infinite
 peace ;
For he's old, and he knows that, whatever befall,
There is nothing that matters, no, nothing
 at all.

The little jade Buddha (on us be his balm!)—
 The Wheel turneth just
 As it must, as it must,
So he sits in an ageless, ineffable calm
Where apples and empires may ripen or fall,
But there's nothing that matters, no, nothing
 at all.

A DREAM-DINNER

No silk pavilions raised of Eastern fable
For me, nor ottomans and awkward poses ;
Dark oak upon the walls, upon the table
White napery, old silver, and red roses—
These, o'er a garden where dream-borders shine
I build of dreams, and Stella comes to dine.

I do not set the cresset's sparks a-flitting
Down an Arabian dusk on hot winds roaming ;
Softest electrics in an old French fitting
I blend for her with June's wide-windowed
gloaming,
Wherein I hang the yellow moon, because
A friend to lovers moonlight ever was.

Slaves do not hand us, of Aladdin's uses,
The snow-cooled sherbets of date-palmed
Damascus ;
We do not squeeze the pink pomegranate's juices,
But, when a shadow-butler bends to ask us,
We plump for Château Rothschild '78
(Stella's particular about the date).

A DREAM-DINNER

No roasted kid for us, no fatted suckling,
Whereof a Sultan eats, in silken splendour ;
We like clear soup, Scotch salmon, and a
duckling,
And heaped red strawberries whose legions
render
Enough for half a dozen helps at least
When Stella shares with me a moonshine feast.

No conch shall blare, nor any nautch-girl's cymbal
Sully the flow of pleasant conversation ;
My Stella—bless her !—has a wit that's nimble ;
Her tongue makes music for my admiration ;
And, should some sudden silence drop the veil,
Outside my nightingales take up the tale.

Mocha comes last — black-magic, hot and
fragrant,
Ambrosial on the summer evening falling ;
We drink it on a terrace where the vagrant
Blue smoke-wreaths curl, and where the owls
are calling ;
And what's to pay ? But nothing. You will find,
That he who dines in dreams leaves naught
behind,
Saving, mayhap, a little peace of mind !

THE TATTIE-BOGLE

A FARMER once, to scare the birds away,
O'er his poor seeds set up, to leer and ogle,
A raffish moon-face, stuffed with straw and hay,
A tattie-bogle ;

And rook and daw and stare their pinions spread
Incontinent ; for, so they judged the matter,
Some scowling foe stood there, and off they fled
With startled chatter.

A week the portent stood in sun and rain
And fluttered rags of dread. A sparrow,
nathless,
Whose nestlings cried, dashed down and
snatched a grain,
And got off scathless.

Emboldened, back she flew ; to such good end
The others followed, craning and alarmful,
To find the monster, if perhaps no friend,
At least unharmed.

THE TATTIE-BOGLE

To-day the bogle wags, a thing of jest
And open scorn : the very pipits mock it ;
A jenny-wren, I'm told, has built her nest
In one torn pocket !

Heart of my heart, and so be aught of awe
That darkens on your path : the buckram
rogue 'll
Prove, when you face him, but a ghost of
straw—
A tattie-bogle !

IF FLOWERS HAD GHOSTS

IF flowers had ghosts, that thin perfume
Of buds long picked should haunt your room—
Your room that dreams in ancient way,
Where beaux have knelt with Spring's
 bouquet
For belles in silk of Jacquard's loom :

When wintry fields are bare of bloom
They'd come a-tremble from the tomb ;
You'd love them when the skies were grey,
 If flowers had ghosts !

So now, when April fires the broom
And cowslips clamber up the coomb,
You would not—this I greatly pray—
Forget the friends of yesterday,
Who spoke of her in days of gloom,
 If flowers had ghosts ?

WEST HIGHLAND

WITH stern a-droop, a dowie chiel,
I see him lugged at Beauty's heel,
A captive bound on Fashion's wheel,
 Down Bond Street's aisle,
Far from his land of cairn and creel
 In grey Argyle.

I wonder if in dreams he goes
Afar from streets and kindred woes,
A-rabbing with eager nose
 And strenuous paw
In birch-woods where the west wind blows
 By banks of Awe ;

And if his slumbers take him back
To trail the mountain-fox's track,
In corries of the shifting wrack
 Where one may spy
Old Cruachan's twin Titan stack
 Heaved to the sky ;

WEST HIGHLAND

Or, boudoir-bred degenerate,
If ne'er he knew the nobler state,
The birk-clad brae, the roaring spate,
 The tod's dark lair—
Too spiritless to girn at Fate
 Or greatly care.

And better this, perhaps you'd say,
Than break his heart for yesterday,
Uneasy in the dreams that stray
 Where lost trails stretch—
Well, he's my pity either way,
 Poor little wretch !

THE BADGER

LAST of the night's quaint clan
He goes his way—
A simple gentleman
In sober grey :
To match lone paths of his
In woodlands dim,
The moons of centuries
Have silvered him.

Deep in the damp, fresh earth
He roots and rolls,
And builds his winter girth
Of sylvan tolls :
When seek the husbandmen
The furrow brown,
He hies him to his den
And lays him down.

THE BADGER

There may he rest for me,
Nor ever stir
For clamorous obloquy
Of terrier :
Last of the night's quaint clan
He curls in peace—
A friendly gentleman
In grey pelisse.

A VILLAGE POET

HIS was the red-roofed corner shop
 (They pulled it down to build the station)
Into whose dimness one might drop
 For bird's-eye or for conversation,
And meet what most of us have missed—
A Poet-and-Tobacconist.

Delightful trades, of Heaven blent ;
 The homely, useful, aromatic,
With the divine, Olympian-lent,
 The serviceable with the Attic :
'Twas good to meet a man whose views
Combined Tobacco and the Muse.

I do not mean to say you'd call
 My friend a Shakspeare or a Milton ;
He liked to write, and, after all,
 That 's what the *Iliad* was built on.
If Homer's job had been no joy
To Homer, who'd have heard of Troy ?

A VILLAGE POET

The merchant first (although he found
His chief delight the reed of *Thyrsis*),
His navy-cut continued sound,

In fact much sounder than his verses,
Although *The Wealdsman* now and then
Would print a sample from his pen.

Of local happenings he would sing,
Of maidens too and how to love them ;
He still had heart to hail the Spring
Though he had seen some fifty of them ;
A jolly fellow, hale and stout,
Who knew of dressing flies and trout.

A desultory Unionist,
On Gladstone he could 'speak satiric,'
And stop to serve an ounce of twist
Or read aloud his latest lyric ;
Or, if that week there wasn't one,
To talk of Alfred Tennyson.

I recollect how he'd applaud
(His mind mayhap on some lost Mabel)
The genius that created 'Maud'
And sang the loves of Arthur's Table ;
Unwedded he—and quite content—
But very fond of sentiment.

A VILLAGE POET

Ah well, 'tis now this many a day
 (How swiftly do the seasons pass us !)
He's doffed, as he'd have said, the clay
 And gone to find his loved Parnassus :
The gods of all the mysteries
Be good to him where'er he is !

His memory's green, his face stands out
 Amid a score of friendly faces,
Cheery as then, nor do I doubt
 He sojourns in congenial places,
Where on his jolly brow doth stay
The Weed's pale flower, the Poet's bay.

TO SEPTIMIUS IN FEBRUARY

TO-DAY the young year in her sleep was stirring
In woods and hearts of men ;
To-night 'tis sharper and the cold's recurring—
Septimius, what then ?

Draw in and talk of politics and speeches
To the old tiresome tune ?
Not we who saw pale sunshine on the beeches
Only this afternoon ;

Who saw the snowdrops frail in woodland
hollows,
Who heard the building rooks
Herald a time of flowers and skimming
swallows,
Green fields and brawling brooks.

Nay, pledge anew, Septimius, such gages
Of May-time's radiant rout
Till, as becometh fishermen and sages,
Our talk shall trend to trout—

TO SEPTIMIUS IN FEBRUARY

To little trout, to little streams that scurry
Where the hill curlews cry,
O'er which the neophyte may splash and flurry,
Yet heap his basket high ;

To careful trout, for pundits skilled and wary,
That use upon the chalk,
Plump and recondite, dubious and chary—
On such shall turn our talk.

Then since we're of the Faithful, vowed to
follow
Old Thames's placid flow,
We'll breathe of his leviathans that wallow,
In bated tones and low ;

And I, mayhap, shall say a word in token
Of one prodigious friend
Who lurks—excuse a statement more out-
spoken—
'Twixt Marlow and Bourne End ;

While you, Septimius, set memory roaming
To That which smashed amain
Your trace of proof, and hint how some soft
gloaming
He yet shall come again.

TO SEPTIMIUS IN FEBRUARY

So shall we sit this firelit hour, contriving
Blue halcyon days that hold
The lisp of streams in crisping reed-beds striving,
And meadows spun with gold.

BELOW THE WEIR

BEYOND the punt the swallows go
Like blue-black arrows to and fro,
Now stooping where the rushes grow,
 Now flashing o'er a shallow ;
And overhead in blue and white
High Spring and Summer hold delight ;
'All right !' the black-cap calls, 'All right !'
 His mate says from the sallow.

O dancing stream, O diamond day,
O charm of lilac-time and May,
O whispering meadows green and gay,
 O fair things past believing !
Could but the world stand still, stand still
When over wood and stream and hill
This morn's eternal miracle
 The rosy Hours are weaving !

Eternal, for I like to think
That mayflowers, crimson, white and pink,
When I am dust the boughs shall prink,
 On days to live and die for ;

BELOW THE WEIR

That sun and cloud, as now, shall veer,
And streams run tumbling off the weir,
Where still the mottled trout rolls clear
For other men to try for.

I like to think, when I shall go
To this essential dust, that so
I yet may share in flowers that blow,
And with such brave sights mingle,
If tossed by summer breeze on high
I'm carried where the cuckoos cry
And dropped beside old Thames to lie
A sand-grain on a shingle.

Meanwhile the swallows flash and skim
Like blue-black arrows notched and trim,
And splendid kingcups lift a brim
Of gold to king or peasant,
And 'neath a sky of blue and white
High Spring with Summer weaves delight :
'All right !' the black-cap calls, 'All right !'
And life is very pleasant.

PATIENCE ON A WEIR

WHEN the summer sun is lusty,
And the roads are dry and dusty,
And the crimson may 's turned rusty
 On the stems,
From a weir a maiden fishes,
As can anyone who wishes,
Since beneath the boards there swishes
 Father Thames.

You may watch the cane wand winnow
As it drops her dace or minnow
(Which their deft and expert spin owe
 To a wrist
Tough as steel, but trim and tiny,
And as round as that of Phryne),
Where the stream spreads silver-shiny,
 Sunbeam-kissed.

PATIENCE ON A WEIR

With a will that does not vary
See, she waits, a water-fairy
Come ashore in cool and airy
 Linen drill,
While a kingfisher, down dashing
Where the schools of fry are splashing,
Spots a rival, and goes flashing
 With his kill.

Still at eve when swifts are plying
And the summer sunset 's dying
You may see her light lure flying
 Up and out ;
Oh, may I be near to net him
(If the gods grant that she get him),
Should some Triton (Thamis, let him !)
 Send a trout.

THE BIG TROUT

PULL up the rypecks ! Push her home !
It's roses all the way !
Let garlands lie on Thames's foam—
A trout has died to-day !
Room for the victor—ho, there, room !—
Who calls the gods to scan
No halfling of the liliated gloom,
But that leviathan.

Anew (with jostling words unstayed)
We fight it, inch by inch,
From that first moment when he made
The line scream off the winch :
'Twas so we struck, we held him so
Lest weed had triumph wrecked ;
Thus to his leap the point dropped low,
And thus a rush was checked.

O sought-for prize ! Full many a day
The old black punt has swung
Beyond his stance, in twilight's grey,
Or when the dawn was young ;

THE BIG TROUT

What hopes were ours, what heart-beats high
Have thrilled us, when he rolled
Up from the jade-green deep, a-nigh,
Dull-gleaming as of gold !

Glide on, ye stately swans, with grace—
Ye ne'er again shall see
His headlong dash among the dace
Beneath the willow-tree ;
Ye little bleak, lift up your heads,
Ye gudgeon, skip at score,
The run between the lily beds
Shall know its lord no more !

Yet, while th' exalted pulses stir,
Regret takes hands with Pride,
Regret for that most splendid spur—
The Wish Ungratified :
With hammering heart that bulk I con,
That spread of tail and fin,
And sigh, like him of Macedon,
With no more worlds to win.

Pull up the rypecks, can't you, Jim !
It's roses all the way !
But ne'er another fish like him
For any other day !

THE BIG TROUT

Room for the victor—lock, there, room!—

Who calls the gods to scan

No halfling of the amber gloom,

But that leviathan.

THE TROPHY

I'd dined at home ; I'd read till ten ;
I'd thought, ' That space upon the wall
Above the stuffed Thames trout
Wants filling.' That was really all ;
And then I closed my eyes, and then
I let my pipe go out.

.
We crawled, the Khan of Khot and I,
On a Thibetan precipice
(It *was* Thibet, I think),
A place of snow and black abyss ;
We lay on rock—mid wind and sky—
Above a beetling brink.

For lo, along the ridge there fed
The sheep that ne'er a shepherd know
Save the shrill wind of morn—
Five *Oves Ammon* of the snow ;
I saw the big ram lift his head,
Twin-mooned in mighty horn.

THE TROPHY

Broadside he turned, a mountain-god
In sweep of coronal sublime,
And the fierce whisper broke—
The Khan of Khot's, he hissed '*Tak time!*'
And handed me my spinning rod ;
And as he did, I woke !

.
One thing at least is clear, and that's
My empty wall is yet to fill ;
Though oft with even's shade
I see that great head from the hill,
Unstable as the Cheshire cat's,
Look down therefrom and fade.

THE TROUT FISHER

PAN doth pipe to us anew,
Reedy calls and catches,
So we'll go and throw a fly,
Dainty, delicate and dry,
Forty miles from Waterloo—
Where the May-fly hatches.

Run of nigh an hour it is
From the City's leanness ;
There's a walk when you get out—
Riverwards a mile about—
Mile of elms and Alderneys,
And surpassing greenness.

Mile of gold imagining,
Crowned of all creation ;
Eve may bring the fat content
Born of proud Accomplishment ;
Morning hath the angel's wing
Of Anticipation.

THE TROUT FISHER

Luck's a jade blows hot and cold ;
Heed no wise men give her ;
Yet howe'er the night come in--
Three good brace, or not a fin--
Always she's a lass of gold
Walking to the river.

IN OCTOBER

I

IN Richmond Park
The leaf was thinned,
The dusk grew dark,
Loud piped the wind ;
The blown West yellowed
A cloud's torn cloak,
An old stag bellowed
Beneath an oak.

Now here's delight
To think I've stood
And met the night
In a lone wood
Where great stags thunder
And antlers toss,
Eight miles—or under—
From Charing Cross.

IN OCTOBER

II

The bees still haunt the garden border
 Though nights come crisp and cold,
And berries ripen in their order
 In hedgerows manifold ;
The beech has stolen the summer's gold,
The gold of the summer sun,
 And now comes in October
 With skies soft and sober
And mornings full of melody and red cubs that
 run.

There's some that like an April coppice
 So tender to behold ;
There's some that like the pride of poppies
 Among the barley bold ;
But I, I like an autumn wold
And a wood where summer's done,
 And white hounds and limber
 To sing through its timber
The melody, the melody that makes the red
 fox run.

WITH THE MULE-TRAIN

MULES and mesas and mosquitoes
And a day that half its heat owes
To its jobs, its dust, the cantrips of its squealing
muley teams ;
While the sun-glare, jumpy, aching,
Sets the thirsty levels quaking,
Till a young man might see visions and an old
man might dream dreams.

Mine go this way, green, consoling :
There's the ridge and furrow rolling
To the near-by home horizon, grey and misty,
cold and still ;
And the wet hangs on the hedges,
And the clouds have mackerel edges ;
Miles away a gorse blurs blueely on the land-
scape's only hill.

That's his point—I'd have you notice,
Not a tucked-up cur coyote's—

WITH THE MULE-TRAIN

'Tis a big red Midland dog-fox leads across his
native grass,
Full of pluck, and full of cunning,
And (at present) full of running,
Raised on turkey-cock at Christmas and on
goose at Michaelmas.

Now in dreams the usual course is
That a chap may choose his horses,
And I've always leant to longtails when there's
galloping to do ;
But to-day I'm on a racer,
Not some screw hunt-steeplechaser,
But the sort that wins at Aintree with at least
eleven two.

He's the raking powerful jumper ;
Though the bank-flushed brook's a
bumper,
Though the blackthorn's dark and hairy with
a ditch that's deep and wide,
His no scrambled blown endeavour,
Smooth as clock-work, quick and clever,
One turn faster, half an ear-cock, and he's
over in his stride !

WITH THE MULE-TRAIN

That's the sort : he fairly smothers
With his gallop all the others ;
We're alone when, hackles lifted, hounds are
racing for a kill,
And the pirate rooks are stooping
At a brush that's mired and drooping,
And a beaten fox is crawling up the hedge
below the hill.

There, they've got him sure and certain;
So — who-whoop ! Ring down the
curtain—
Mules and mesas and mosquitoes, mighty things
have come to pass,
For a penniless poor devil
Has had twenty minutes' revel
On a thousand-guinea racehorse and five miles
of English grass !

THE FOX

THE birds see him first, jay and blackbird and
thrush ;
They shriek at his coming and curse him,
each one ;
With the clay of the vale on his pads and his
brush,
It's the Fallowfield fox and he's pretty near
done :
It's a couple of hours since a whip tally-ho'd
him ;
Now the rookery's stooping to mob and to
goad him ;
There's an earth on the hill, but he's cooked
past believing
And his tongue's hanging out and his wet ribs
are heaving.

Here he comes up the field at a woebegone trot ;
He's stiff as a poker, he's done all he knows ;
Now the ploughmen'll view him as likely as not ;
There—they run to the paling and yell as
he goes :

THE FOX

Here's an end, if we live to be two minutes
older ;

See, he turns a glazed eye o'er a mud-spattered
shoulder ;

There's a hound through the hedgerow. . . .

Game's up, and he's beaten,

And he faces about with a snarl to be eaten.

‘MINE EYES TO THE HILLS’

OLD David the Psalmist he laid down the cup,
The wine ceased to gladden, the harp had
lost tune,

And he went to his casement, I think, and
looked up

Where the hills of the Philistines fronted the
moon,

And he thought of old days—and a sling that
he took

And of five smooth white pebbles he'd picked
from a brook.

And his eye lighted up as he looked at his hills,
The hills of old triumphs, and high-riding
stars,

When he watched by the rush of the snow-
watered rills

Where the wild asses drank and lay down on
the scars,

In the days when he'd hunted and followed his
flocks

Where the little grey conies ran over the rocks.

‘MINE EYES TO THE HILLS’

And his spirit was caught in the magical calm
Of far rugged faces, of scarps and of screees,
For a day on a hill-side will lend you a balm
That begins with bell-heather and murmur
of bees,
And ends with the mantle of silence that drops
’Twixt man and his troubles on reaching the
Tops.

So now, when the nights have grown warm
with July
(And London in summer’s as bad as
Bombay),
Our town-sickened hearts through the windows
will fly
To Teviot and Tayside, Balquhiddar and Spey,
To loch and to river, to corrie and strath,
Where we too have met with Goliaths of Gath.

Oh, giants we’ve countered—trout, salmon or
stag—
We dream of you now and of battles we’ve
fought
By brown streaming waters, by braeface and hag,
Where, if you’ve escaped us, you’re still to be
sought ;

‘MINE EYES TO THE HILLS’

But it matters no whit how the combat has
gone,
Since the hills in their bigness and peace have
looked on.

Then we fashion—for Fancy plays wonderful
freaks—

The sough of a pine-wood, the scent of a brae,
With, massed far above us, crags, saddles and
peaks,

Where the gales of the gods chase the cob-
webs away,
And roar in the gulleys, and whoop down the
cuts,
And bring the wild grouse-packs like smoke to
the butts.

By leagues of red heather and murderous
midge,

By crisp Autumn duskings a-bellow with deer,
By straight-driven coveys, by rigging and
ridge—

It's mountains for us now that August is near;
For London's got every sublunary ill,
And our hearts—like old David's—are fain for
‘the hill.’

THE LAST STAND

TO HER WHO WENT HOME

STREAKED with sleet where his squadrons ride,
The dark wind wasteth the bleak hill-side ;

Love, where we stood in the morn's blue
weather,

Only to-night is the sodden heather,
Only the dark and the storm abide.

Only the dark and the winds that moan
And the smack of the hail-shower's stinging
stone,

Only the squall and the butt's scant shelter
And the black peat puddle where snowflakes
welter,

Love, where you left me to wait alone.

Love, where the firelight laughs in glee
You pet the puppy and stir your tea,

While here the North shall blow as he
listeth

And my butt's bereft, and the red grouse
twisteth—

And deuce a feather is touched by me !

‘SCAPE! SCAPE!’

THE lawn is all with rime embossed ;
There must have been a touch of frost
 This fair effect contriving ;
But blue of cornflowers is the sea ;
The marsh is gold ; it seems to me
 The snipe should be arriving.

The snipe’s a nimble little elf ;
His bill’s as long as he himself ;
 He dodges like the devil.
I take my gun and look for him
Beside the ditch’s silent brim
 And round the sea-girt level ;

And—there the bouncing Clumber pup
Tempestuously puts him up !
 ‘*Scape—Scape,*’ he blithely carols ;
And so he does, before my eyes,
Because I hate the way he flies,
 And miss with both my barrels.

FLIGHTING

DEEP the ditch and very muddy,
And the time seems very long ;
Gone the sunset—wild and ruddy,
The West roars a song ;
And a windy twilight's falling
And it's lonesome as can be
Ere you hear the wild geese calling
Off the cold wet sea.

Yes, 'tis lonesome in the ditches
(Where's the whistle of the wings ?)
And the dusk is full of witches
And of Big Black Things :
Funk, blue funk for him who strikes it
Has the bogey-haunted bog,
And the only one who likes it
Is a red wet dog.

He's a-twitch to hear the whicker
Of the pinions down the sky,
While the ghosts, they bawl and bicker
And the gusts boom by ;

FLIGHTING

And you pat him for protection—
Ah, you hardly would suppose
So much comfort and affection
In a cold wet nose.

Hark, the gaggle ! Up the gun, then—
'Twas the neatest left-and-right :
'Fetch 'em, boy, and we'll be done, then ;
Two's enough to-night.
Leave the shadows to their sinking,
Leave the ghosts their howling glee,
It's yourself that will be thinking
Of your hot wet tea !'

THE CHRISTMAS COCK- PHEASANT

THE Christmas cock-pheasant, he crows on
the hill ;

His spurs are as javelins, as horn is his bill ;
A fox for fine cunning, he's brave to behold,
A Syrian gleaming in purple and gold ;
A sage of fourth season

He knows the red reason

For sticks in the cover and 'stops' in the strip,
And back through the beaters he'll modestly
slip.

When first season youngsters swing over the
trees

To plump in the open as dead as a cheese,
He'll run like a rabbit, he'll squat like a
hare,

But nothing will make him get up in the air ;
The boys hit and hammer
The tree-trunks and clamour,

THE CHRISTMAS COCK-PHEASANT

The gun on the flank stands in just the right
spot,
But he's back up the hedgerow to rise out of
shot.

When the last drive's been driven, the last
stand been stood,
When the last of the beaters push out of the
wood,
When the slowest retriever has ceased to 'seek
dead'
Where the snow-powdered stubble rings hard
to the tread,
 He's not for the pick-up ;
 Hark, there's his hoarse hiccup
Afar in the twilight, blue, jewelled and chill—
The hoary old blackguard who laughs at 'em
still !

TO AN ELDERLY FEMALE

A JANUARY IDYLL

IN the January chill
I beheld you on the hill,
O most angular old Jill,
 Tall and gaunt :
Unapproachable and prude,
With a face of Don't Intrude,
And a general attitude
 Of avaunt !

By a mincing step and stiff,
By a short and tentative
And most disapproving sniff
 Now and then,
By a prim, tea-party air
And a penetrating stare,
I could tell you couldn't bear
 ' Hateful men ! '

TO AN ELDERLY FEMALE

Elegant, if ancient wreck,
How that mincing gait found check,
How you slewed that scrawny neck
 With a twist ;
Startled, yes, but still refined,
Then you ambled up the wind,
Yeld and venerable hind
 That I missed !

MEMORIES

Now 's the time when the August weather
Makes a magic to haunt my desk :
Coveys calling across the heather,
Salmon running the winding Esk,
Wind and sunshine that tan to leather
Features sunburnt and picturesque.

Now 's the time when Memory bridges
The locusts' years and their woeful track,
Bringing the days when we faced the ridges
Light of footstep and lithe of back,
Where the versatile Highland midges
Lapped the blood of the Sassenach.

Days of boyhood, that sought to jeopard
Uncle John, in the Past are shut ;
(I'll admit he was slightly peppered,
But deny that the skin was cut,
Though he roared like a wounded leopard
Writhing about in the right-hand butt).

MEMORIES

As the bees o'er the meadows hover,
Storing their sweets for Autumn's chill,
So I also from Memory's clover
Take the sweets that her blooms distil ;
These endure when the last drive's over,
Pipes are lit, and we've turned down-hill.

Down the hill ; for the mists are crawling
Up the corries in ghostly wrack ;
Down the hill ; for the dusk is falling,
Lodge-lights gleam where the pines mass
black,
And the grouse on the tops are calling
Faintly, mockingly, ' Back—go back ! '

SWALLOWS

THE train has left the hills behind
And South we're flying fast :
' *Clack—Clack, alack,* ' the pistons grind,
' That Summer cannot last,
That holidays are past ' ;
And on the humming wires that flow
Between the posts that flit,
Regardless of the G.P.O.
Assembling swallows sit.

They sit, the signal and the sign
Of days of done delight,
I see them all along the line
A-busking them for flight,
In decent black-and-white ;
And ' Oh, ' I cry, ' you dapper dears,
The leaf and I are brown,
And you are going to Algiers
And I am going to Town.

' On Afric's strand you 'll meet the sun,
But I, when fogs are mirk,

SWALLOWS

Shall walk along the London one
And only meet my work,
Which mightily doth irk';
And still the engine's dirge endures—
'*Alack, alack, alack,*'
Because they're going to the Moors,
And I am coming back.

THIRTY MINUTES LATE

WALLFLOWERS in the station-master's garden,
Please, your pardon ;
But I've waited for the train for nearly five-
and-twenty minutes,
And I've seen our only porter shoo the little
olive linnets
From the apple-blossom's petals,
While the smooth and shiny metals
Run all empty up and down,
To and from the town of London—London
Town :
And what else is there to do
If I may not talk to you ?

For there's something in your restful yellow
tawny,
Soft and lawny
Old-world faces that can calm a rather right-
eous irritation ;
And your scent, with tar and sunshine, fills our
humble little station

THIRTY MINUTES LATE

With a country smell and proper
That distillers never stopper,
And that gold could never buy,
Though you search the shops of London till
you die :
For 'tis home and May and mirth,
So 'tis all that 's best on earth !

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